

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN FINLAND:
Case Studies of Finns with Limited English Proficiency

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Englannin näkyvyys suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa on kasvanut vahvasti viime vuosikymmenien aikana. Englannin rooli ja sen merkitys suomalaisten elämässä on lisääntynyt erityisesti nuorten parissa. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset työelämästä viittaavat siihen, että englannin kielen taito nähdään jopa perusosana ammatillista osaamista. Tiedemaailmassa taas on havahduttu siihen, että tiedekeskustelu tapahtuu yhä useammin englanniksi suomen kielen kustannuksella. Tämä saattaa vaikeuttaa osaltaan suomalaisten korkeakoulujen mahdollisuuksia käyttää suomenkielistä opetusmateriaalia. Samaan aikaan noin joka neljäs suomalainen arvio itse oman englannin kielen taitonsa puutteelliseksi. Näin ollen herääkin kysymys, johtaako englannin kielen kasvanut rooli heikosti englantia osaavan väestöryhmän syrjäytymiskehitykseen tai vähintäänkin rajoittuneeseen osallisuuteen suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa.</p> <p>Koska heikosti englantia osaavien suomalaisten arjesta englannin kielen ympäröimänä on tehty hyvin vähän tutkimusta, tämän laadullisen kandidaatintutkielman tarkoitus on kartoittaa heidän arkielämänsä kokemuksiaan ja tutkia heikosti englantia taitavien käsityksiä omasta osallisuudestaan suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa. Tutkimusta varten suoritettiin kaksi puolistrukturoitua haastattelua, jotka kestivät noin tunnin. Haastateltavat olivat molemmat yli 55-vuotiaita, suhteellisen hyvässä yhteiskunnallisessa asemassa ja arvioivat omat englannin kielen taitonsa hyvin heikoksi. Haastattelumateriaali litteroitiin ja analysoitiin laadullisesti teemoittelun avulla, jotta saatiin selville mahdollisia yhteneväisyyksiä heikosti englantia puhuvien suomalaisten kokemusten välillä.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat selvän eron englannin kielen käytössä työelämän ja vapaa-ajan konteksteissa. Haastateltavat kokivat törmäävänsä englannin kieleen enemmän vapaa-aikanaan kuin työelämässä. Työelämän englanti loi usein akuutin tarpeen kielitaidon parantamiselle, mutta todellinen motivaatio uuden oppimiselle tuli enemmän vapaa-ajan aktiviteeteista. Vapaa-ajan englanti nähtiin usein eräänlaisena lisäetuna, ja parempi englannin kielen taito lisäsi elämisen mukavuutta, kun taas työelämän englanti asetti kovia haasteita haastateltaville ja ilmeni usein tietokonevälitteisessä ympäristössä. Haastateltavat eivät kokeneet yhteiskunnallisen osallisuutensa olevan juurikaan uhattuna puutteellisen kielitaidon seurauksena mutta ymmärsivät osallisuuden ensisijaisesti ihmistenvälisenä ilmiönä kasvottomien sosiaalisten rakenteiden sijaan. Haastateltavat ilmaisivat kuitenkin huolensa lisääntyneestä vaatimuksesta osata englantia suomalaisilla työmarkkinoilla.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää jatkotutkimuksen suunnittelussa sekä yleisesti kielioikeuksien toteutumisen valvonnassa.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Englannin kieli, kielitaito, arki, osallisuus, syrjäytyminen, limited English proficiency, social exclusion	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the English language has grown substantially in Finland in the past few decades, and English has gained much more visibility in many areas of life. The high frequency of English-language expressions in advertisements, company names and spoken language reflects this position (see e.g. Paakkinen 2008; Pahta and Taavitsainen 2003, 2008). Most Finns are used to encountering English in their daily lives. Some Finns can even be said to live and breathe the English language, as they spend a considerable amount of their day reading, writing, hearing and speaking English (Leppänen et al. 2011). Nevertheless, a certain proportion of Finns do not know English at all and an even greater proportion of Finns have somewhat inadequate English skills (ibid.). Limited English proficiency can hamper full participation in certain areas of life (see e.g. Hiidenmaa 2003; Leppänen et al 2011; Virkkula 2008). Some of the problematic situations caused by limited English skills could be described as minor hindrances in life whereas others might prevent one totally from active participation in important social arenas. For instance, a situation where one might not be able to read the novels of one's favourite author in their original language can be considered a minor problem. In contrast, a situation where a university student with limited English skills has no other option than reading an academic English course book for an examination can be regarded as a major challenge indeed. Consequently, it appears relevant to ask whether the central role of English in Finland is leading to increasingly major problems and possibly even social exclusion for people with limited English proficiency.

While the role of English as the new lingua franca of the Finnish business world and its new requirements for Finnish employees and their English skills have been studied to some extent (see eg. Virkkula 2008; Leppänen et al. 2011), very little research exists on how the English language affects Finns with limited English proficiency in their everyday life as a whole, not only in their working life. As people with limited English proficiency form a considerable minority in Finnish society, it is essential to hear what kind of position the English language has in their life and whether they feel socially included or excluded because of their limited English proficiencies. Thus, the aim of the present piece of research is to study qualitatively the daily life experiences of Finns with limited English proficiency and how English shows in their everyday life and whether or not they feel socially excluded from certain areas of life. To

fulfil this purpose I have interviewed two Finns with limited English skills. Next, I will introduce the structure of the present thesis. In Section 2, I will present relevant research on the use of English in today's Finland and on the possible exclusion of people with limited English proficiency from certain social arenas. In Section 3, I will move on to presenting the research questions of my study and, in Section 4, I will describe the data collection, introduce the participants and describe the method of the data analysis, which is the thematic analysis. In Section 5, I will analyse the interviews using the thematic analysis as a method. Section 6, in turn, will consist of discussion and conclusion, in which I will discuss the meanings of the results and suggest ideas for further research on the topic. The bibliography will form Section 7, while Section 8 will consist of two appendices, which are the outlines of the interviews both in Finnish and in English. Considering the length restriction of the thesis, the present study serves primarily to give more voice to Finns with limited English proficiency and to show way for further research on the topic.

2 ENGLISH IN FINLAND

English is being used in Finland to a great extent. Finns often encounter English both at work or in education and at their leisure, but socio-demographic factors, such as age, occupation, the place of residence and education level, have a major effect on the actual need for English knowledge. Section 2.1 deals with these issues, while Section 2.2 concentrates on describing the different degrees of Finns' English use. More emphasis is given to Finns whose English skills are very limited. The final subsection, Section 2.3, speculates the future of people with limited English proficiency in Finland and their possible exclusion from certain important social arenas.

2.1 English in the daily life of Finns

The vast majority of Finns encounter English frequently in their physical surroundings. The situations in which English is seen or heard tend to be commercially charged. According to a survey conducted by Leppänen et al. (2011: 88), Finns see or hear English most often in

informal contexts, such as in shops, restaurants, streets and stores. In contrast, English is less frequently encountered in official contexts, such as in churches, libraries, banks or offices. The results of the survey indicate that English tends to be used particularly in commercial contexts. Furthermore, it is likely that Finnish advertisements use somewhat more English and English expressions than those of many other countries (Paakkinen 2008: 326). Consequently, in the eyes of Finns, the English language and commercialism seem to go hand in hand.

In addition to commercial contexts, English is often present at the workplace and in education. According to Leppänen et al. (2011: 88), nearly 80 % of people in working life and 71 % of students see or hear English at their workplace or at their place of study. Almost half of the people in working life use English actively at least once a week (Leppänen et al. 2011: 126). Furthermore, today in many fields, English proficiency is increasingly considered a basic requirement for the sufficient management of a job, which means that a good knowledge of English is no longer regarded as an additional skill but instead it is often a prerequisite for work (Virkkula 2008: 383). At work the most common situations in which English skills are needed are reading and searching for information (Leppänen et al. 2011: 126). As far as the academic world is concerned, it is very common that Finnish university students need to read English course books (Hiidenmaa 2003: 80), which may seriously hamper the studies of students with limited English proficiency. Furthermore, scholars, such as Pahta and Taavitsainen (2003, 2008) and Hiidenmaa (2003) have expressed their growing concern for the top Finnish research published mainly in English. Hiidenmaa (2003: 79) states that the problem is not actually what researchers publish in English but instead what researchers do not publish in Finnish. When little research is published in Finnish, the logical consequence is a scarcity of teaching material in Finnish, which, in turn, often results in university students studying English texts and course books (Hiidenmaa 2003: 79–83). It appears questionable whether people with limited English skills are truly able to participate in Finnish higher education or to work in the academic field. Thus, the latest results of English usage in Finland confirm the growing need for English proficiency in the working and student life.

Even though Finns need English increasingly in working life, according to a survey conducted by Leppänen et al. (2011: 106–107), more than half of Finns still announce that they use

English most often at their leisure. Respondents of the survey were able to mark that they used English most often *in my free time, at work, at school or in my studies* or *I do not use English*. Only roughly 9 % indicated that they do not use English in any way. It seems that the two contexts where Finns most commonly use English at their leisure are the following of English speech in subtitled films and television programmes and the listening to music and lyrics in English (Leppänen et al. 2011: 125). Furthermore, when enquired as to their use of English on the Internet, nearly half of the respondents indicated that they search for information in English on the Internet weekly. Only a minority of Finns use English on the Internet for other purposes, such as shopping, playing games or having discussions. In conclusion, it appears that Finns' use of English at leisure might require more passive language skills (listening and reading) than active language skills (speaking and writing) (ibid.).

The main factors contributing to the position of English in Finns' lives are the place of residence, age, the level of education and occupation (Leppänen et al. 2011: 64). City-dwellers appear to encounter English more often than people in the countryside. Similarly, younger people are more likely to encounter English than older people. The level of education seems to have an effect as well, manual workers needing less English than the highly educated. As far as occupation is concerned, managers and experts seem to encounter English more than other workers. Work tasks, however, determine on what kind of linguistic competence is needed (Virkkula 2008: 414). Workers whose tasks include meetings and negotiations often need good English skills in general, particularly oral skills, and cultural knowledge. In contrast, people working with technical machinery usually need the knowledge of the special terminology of the field. All in all, knowledge about a person's place of residence, age, level of education and occupation helps considerably in estimating how much a Finnish person encounters English in their daily life in general.

2.2 The different degrees of Finns' use of English

To illustrate the differences in Finns' English skills and usage and to clarify the whole picture, I will introduce a model where Finns have been placed in different categories according to

their English skills and use. Using Preisler's (2003: 123–124) categorisation of Danes as a base, Leppänen et al. (2011: 164–167) have extended Preisler's original model by roughly dividing Finns aged between 15–79 into three different categories according to their English proficiency and usage. While Preisler (2003: 123–124) divides Danes into two categories called “haves” (people who know English and use it) and “have-nots” (people who do not know English), Leppänen et al. (2011: 164–167) divide Finns aged between 15–79 into three categories named as “haves”, “have-nots” and “have-it-all” (people who are involved with English to a great extent). The percentages of the three different categories are illustrated in Figure 1. Firstly, “have-nots” (6 %) consist of people who do not know English and who are completely uninvolved with English. Secondly, the largest category “haves” (78 %) forms a somewhat heterogeneous group, consisting of people who are involved with English to a greater or lesser degree. Thirdly, “have-it-all” (16 %) are best described as people who have adopted English entirely and in whose lives English has a major position. The present study, however, is more interested in the group of “have-nots”, who are discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

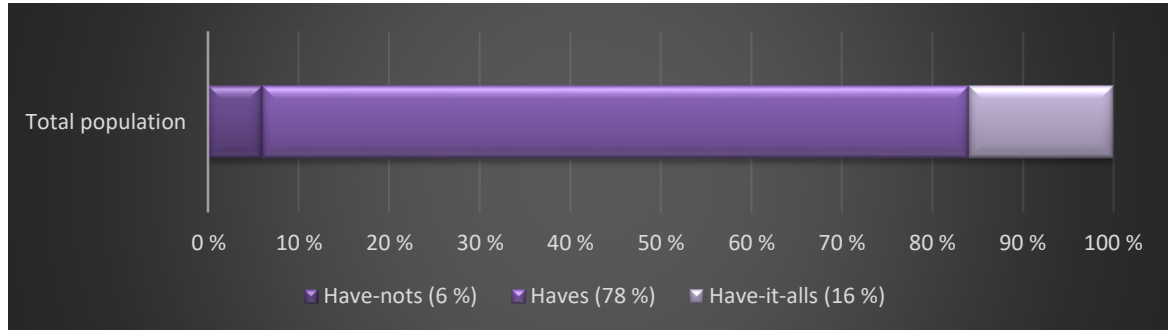


Figure 1. The proportions of “have-nots”, “haves” and “have-it-all” in the whole Finnish population aged between 15–79 (Leppänen et al. 2011: 164)

Leppänen et al. (2011: 164–167) categorise Finns into “have-nots” if they fulfil three conditions. Firstly, “have-nots” have studied English for less than five years or they have had no English studies at all. Secondly, they estimate themselves that their English skills in general are no better than poor. Thirdly, “have-nots” do not use English in any way. In total, the percentage of Finns meeting all of the listed criteria is 6 %. The percentages of Finns meeting the different criteria are illustrated in Figure 2. Furthermore, after examining the

background information of the so-called “have-nots”, who fulfil all three conditions, the researchers have been able to create a social profile for a typical “have-not”. A typical “have-not” is over 45 years, often lives in the countryside, has a low level of education, has never entered university education and is likely to be a manual worker (Leppänen et al. 2011: 165). As the average age of “have-nots” is rather high, this might imply that the number of “have-nots” will slowly reduce in the future. Nevertheless, “have-nots” form a considerable minority with more than 230, 000 Finnish citizens (Leppänen et al. 2011: 38). In addition, approximately 930, 000 Finnish inhabitants, including “have-nots”, have estimated themselves that their English skills are no better than poor (ibid.). To conclude, the actual number of Finns with somewhat limited English proficiency rises relatively high, forming a substantial minority in Finnish society.



Figure 2. The three criteria for “have-nots” and the percentages of Finns meeting the different criteria (Leppänen et al. 2011: 165)

The present study focuses on exploring the outlook of Finnish people with inadequate English skills and it is, therefore, essential to first define who these people are and how they are being referred to in the present piece of research. Although useful, the term “have-not” used by Leppänen et al. (2011) appears slightly too extreme for the research purpose of the present study. For instance, a person who has studied English for more than five years but whose

English skills are still non-existent in practice due to the time between studies and the present moment or due to language disabilities would not fulfil the requirements set for a “have-not” even though the person were completely incapable of interacting in English. For this reason, I have decided to study all of those people who themselves feel that their English skills are somehow deficient. As illustrated in Figure 2, almost one out of four Finns considers their English skills no better than poor (Leppänen et al. 2011: 165). In the present study, I refer to these people as people with limited/insufficient/inadequate English proficiency/skills.

2.3 Social exclusion from certain areas of life as a result of limited English skills?

In today’s Finland, the English language plays a major role in many areas of ordinary Finnish life. It appears, therefore, quite vital to study how it affects the lives of people with limited English proficiency. When Finns were enquired about whether or not Finns with no knowledge of English would remain outsiders in some areas of life in 20 years’ time, 65 % of respondents had a firm opinion of *yes* (Leppänen et al. 2011: 152). In the sequential question, the respondents were able to elaborate upon from which areas of life Finns with limited English skills would become excluded. The list of six given options with their percentages appeared the following: *international interaction* (86 %), *the possibility of getting a job* (77 %), *services provided on the Internet and in the entertainment media* (72 %), *opportunities offered by travel* (72 %), *educational opportunities* (66 %) and *up-to-date information* (56 %). The percentages are illustrated in Figure 3. While it seems merely logical that people with limited English skills often face severe challenges when communicating with representatives of different nationalities or when travelling, it sounds somewhat alarming that, for example, in 20 years’ time Finns living in Finland would be in danger of unemployment in certain fields due to the lack of sufficient English skills. Furthermore, Virkkula (2008: 415) claims that the higher the position of an employee with insufficient English skills is in the Finnish business world, the greater the risk of exclusion grows. According to the results of Leppänen et al. (2011) and Virkkunen (2008), the future of people with limited English proficiency looks relatively dim.

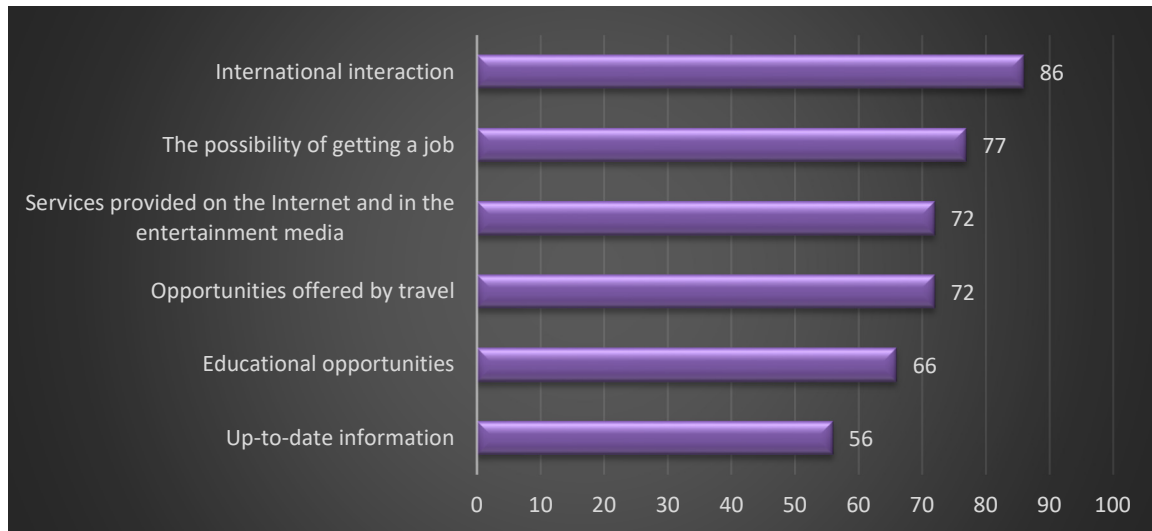


Figure 3. The percentages of the respondents who believe that in 20 years' time Finns with no English skills will become excluded from the given areas of life (Leppänen et al. 2011: 153)

Although almost two out of three Finns shared the opinion according to which people with limited English proficiency would become excluded from certain areas of life in 20 years' time (Leppänen et al. 2011: 152), many people with insufficient English skills themselves might be feeling somewhat differently about their own situation. A more positive image of tomorrow's Finland correlates strongly with the low level of education of the respondents and with a career path mainly in the field of manual work, both strong predictors of poor English proficiency (Leppänen et al. 2011: 64, 152–153). It seems that a proportion of people with limited English skills see their own future in a somewhat brighter light. This, in turn, might imply that people are often unable to see beyond their immediate situation and do not simply miss opportunities or experiences that they are unaware of. Similarly, Preisler (2003: 123) has reported that Danes with limited English proficiency have, in fact, learnt to ignore English-language messages while being rather unaware of their actual amount of exposure to the English language. On the other hand, when people with limited English proficiency are confronted with English and unable to ignore it, their deficient English skills may also cause them to have feelings of anger, frustration, stress and inferiority (Preisler 2003: 124; Virkkula 2008: 404). Nevertheless, the fact that a proportion of people with limited English skills imagine tomorrow's Finland to be more socially inclusive than the majority of Finns might indicate that the position of the English language is not yet strong enough to affect

people's core needs, such as the need for comprehensive education, banking or official matters.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aims at exploring the everyday life experiences of people with limited English skills and understanding how the lack of sufficient English skills affect these people in the Finnish context. In addition, the present piece of research is interested in finding out whether or not Finns with limited English skills feel excluded from some important social arenas. The emphasis of the present study is on the perspective of Finns with limited English proficiency themselves, not on the perspective of an average Finn. The research questions appear the following:

- 1) How insufficient English skills affect the daily life of people with limited English proficiency in Finland?
- 2) Do people with limited English proficiency feel socially excluded from certain areas of Finnish life?

By answering these questions, the present study aims at giving more room for the experiences and opinions of those Finns who have limited English knowledge and who remain in the minority in Finnish society.

4 DATA AND METHOD

4.1 Data and participants

The research data collected for the present study consists of two semi-structured interviews that were both conducted in February 2012. Next, I will introduce the reasons for the choice of data collection method. As the purpose of the study is to learn to understand how people with limited English proficiency experience daily life in Finland where the English language has penetrated many social arenas, I chose to research the topic through in-depth interviews in

order to better perceive English in Finland from the perspective of people with limited English skills. Other reasons for the data collection method, as also pointed out by Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2009: 204–205), were the flexible nature of semi-structured interviewing and the unpredictability of the results, the topic not having been widely researched. The negative aspects of interviewing as a method, which might have affected also the present study, is the interviewee preferring to remain silent about deficiencies and limitations (Foddy 1995: 118, cited in Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 207). As the theme of the interviews was limited English proficiency, the interviewees were somewhat unable to escape the fact that their English skills were insufficient, but instead they were able to polish the truth about how they were managing with their limited English skills. As a consequence, the results need to be interpreted with a pinch of salt. Nevertheless, the positive aspects of interviewing as a method clearly outweigh the negative aspects as far as this particular topic is concerned.

The actual data collection proceeded in the following way. The design of the interview questions was based on earlier research presented in Section 2. Before the interviews the participants were given the outline of the interview questions to evoke memories and thoughts about the topic. The outline of the interviews and its translation into English can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Both interviews were conducted in Finnish because it appeared the most natural language choice in a situation in which Finnish was the first language of the interviewees and the interviewer. Both interviews were also recorded. The first interview lasted approximately for one hour and the second one lasted approximately for forty minutes. The interviews were later transcribed and consequently the analysed data consists of 21 pages of written transcript. As the analysis concentrates more on the content instead of discourse, I have omitted most of the short pauses, prosodic features, such as intonation and rhythm, filling words and false starts from the transcript extracts in order to make them more legible. Only laughter and whistling are marked since they can alter the meaning of an utterance or add meaning to an utterance.

The participants of the present study do not appear under their own names but instead they are being referred as Antero and Eila. Next I will introduce them briefly. Both interviewees live in medium-sized cities in Western Finland. Antero is a 68-year-old retired man who has had no formal schooling after comprehensive education. Despite low education level, Antero used

to work as an engineer for over forty years and his last position at work was relatively high. He was an expert in a very specialised field and worked for a large Finnish company that was doing both national and international business. He had worked in many sections of the company but his latest position was in production development. At school in the 1950s, Antero studied English for four years. Later on he also took a few English courses organised by his employer. In spite of all the effort, Antero has never learnt much English, possibly due to dyslexia. In practice, Antero has no knowledge of conversational English but he has knowledge of the English-language special terms belonging to his own work field. Eila, in her turn, is a 56-year-old woman who has graduated from university with a master's degree in economics. She has been working for several decades in a small company in a position that matches her qualifications. Eila studied English for 2.5 years when she was still in upper secondary school in the 1970s. She has had no formal English teaching after that and she herself describes her overall English skills as very limited.

4.2 Method of Analysis

The data was analysed using *thematic analysis*. Thematic analysis means carefully analysing the data to find recurrent ideas that form different themes (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000: 173). The idea is to find similarities between the interview data. Some of the themes may have their base on the themes of the interview outline (*ibid.*). Yet, all of the themes derive from the data itself but some of the themes can be more anticipated than others. Thematic analysis was chosen as the method of analysis in the present study because little was known on the topic and it was essential to first learn what connects the experiences and thoughts of Finns with limited English proficiency. The themes emerging from the data of the present study were classified under three main themes, which were 1) English at leisure 2) English at work and 3) social exclusion. The first two themes, English at leisure and at work, emerged from the data and were totally unanticipated unlike the third theme of social exclusion, which had its base on the interview outline.

To describe the process of analysis briefly, the themes were not decided in advance and instead they derived from the data. Thus, the analysis was data-driven instead of theory-

driven. This ensured that it was possible for the interviewees to introduce new and unanticipated thoughts and ideas on the topic. First, I listened the audio tapes and read the transcribed interviews several times and made markings to the transcriptions. After that I made a list of all references to the topics of the research questions and coded everything that was said during the interviews into categories. Then I compared the thoughts of the two interviewees and tried to find similarities. After comparing the data I formed three different themes and listened the audio tapes and read the transcriptions once again to ensure that the newly formed themes were truly based on the data. What was striking and clearly visible in the data was the fact that English usage differed a great deal according to the contexts of leisure and working life. This division was so dominating that I decided to form the first two themes based on this discovery. The third theme of social exclusion came naturally from the theme of the interview outline as it was an essential part of the interview.

5 LIVING SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE UBIQUITOUS ENGLISH

Finns with limited English proficiency encountered English daily in different forms but those encounters affected their life differently depending on the context. The interviewees encountered English a great deal at leisure but its effect on their life was less crucial and more optional than the English language that they encountered at work. English encountered at leisure typically brought additional comforts and opened new windows but it was often optional by nature. English encountered at work, in turn, tended to create an acute need for improvement in English proficiency. English at leisure and English at work form Section 5.1 and Section 5.2. Section 5.3 consists of issues related to social exclusion as far as limited English proficiency is concerned. While the interviewees felt mostly socially included, they seemed to understand social exclusion mostly as an interpersonal phenomenon and they appeared to recognise socially marginalising mechanisms and structures somewhat poorly.

5.1 English at leisure

Both Antero and Eila reported that they encountered English at leisure a great deal but it had less impact on their daily life than the English language that they encountered at work. Antero and Eila had seen or heard English substantially in different media, such as on television and on the radio, as well as in advertisements appearing both in the interviewees' physical surroundings and in the electronic and print media. In the following extracts, Eila and Antero describe their encounters with English in their daily environment:

- 1) Englannin kieltähän on tällä hetkeä Suomessa joka paikassa. Siis menee, kadulla kävelee, on englanninkielisiä kauppaliikkeitä, mainoksissa, kaikissa tiedotusvälineissä, englanninkielisiä kaikkia elokuvia, kaikkea sarjoja mitä on, yleensä ne on englannin kielellä suurin osa niistä. Että se on aivan jokapäiväinen tällöinen englannin kielen kuuleminen. (Antero)

The English language is everywhere in Finland at the moment. I mean, you go, you walk in the street, there are English-language shops, in advertisements, in all media, all kind of English-language films, all kind of series there are, usually, most of them are in English. So, this hearing of English is everyday life. (Antero)

- 2) Nykyään, ni sitä on tullut sitä englantia noihin katunäkymiin, siis kaikkia niitä kadunvarsimainoksia, niissä käytetään sumeilematta englantia, ja tosiaan niin ne telkkarimainoksissa on aivan hirveesti englantia --. (Eila)

Nowadays, English has penetrated the streetview, I mean, all those street advertisements, they use English shamelessly, and as I said, there is English terribly in television advertisements --. (Eila)

In addition, Antero remembered having seen English directions for international passengers at Finnish railway and bus stations. He also reported having encountered English spoken in the street, while Eila made no remarks on having heard live English spoken in her physical surroundings at leisure time. When asked about encounters with English in official contexts, such as in Finnish offices, bureaux or banks, neither of them had ever had problems with using only Finnish. To conclude, the daily leisure-time experiences of Eila and Antero seem to reflect very well the experiences of a typical Finn in the survey of Leppänen et al. (2011).

Interestingly, one of Eila and Antero's major language problems at leisure was instruction manuals that lacked Finnish translations even though they are required by the Finnish law. This affected relatively much their daily life and purchase decisions. Antero explains the dilemma:

- 3) Joskus löytyy semmosia että jotain, jonkun haluaa, jonkun vehkeen ostaa ja sitä ei sitten oo suomenkielistä käyttöohjetta ollenkaan että menet ostaan jonkun kameran esimerkiksi niin se

voi olla että siinä ei oo suomenkielistä ohjetta ollenkaan. Sillain se tietysti vähän rajoittaa että ostanko mää tommosen vai tiedäkö mää sitä ennestäänkään tai että tietääkö sen etukäteenkään että onko siinä ohjetta? Tietää että ohjeet on mutta ne on englannin kielellä että tietääkö että suomenkielistä ohjetta ei o? (Antero)

Sometimes it happens that you want something, some gadget and then there are no manual instructions in Finnish at all and you go and buy a camera, for example, and it can happen that there is no Finnish manual at all. In that way, it does limit it if I will buy it or do I actually even know it beforehand whether or not it has a manual? You know that it has a manual but it is in English but do you know that there is no Finnish manual? (Antero)

Eila had the same problem with instruction manuals as Antero but she had developed a compensation strategy to cope with the problematic language situation. As Eila spoke both English and German, although very poorly, she was at times able to compare English and German translations and to conclude what the message would be in Finnish. In addition, occasionally when trying to find out more information on a particular feature of a device on the Finnish online pages of the manufacturer, for instance a certain feature of a printer, Eila reports often finding herself on English-language web pages in the end:

4) -- sitä joutuu vallan kummallisiin englanninkielisiin sivustoihin. (Eila)

-- that is how you end up on strange English-language websites. (Eila)

The case of manual instructions clearly show that not even the requirements of the Finnish law can automatically guarantee Finnish-language service in Finland.

As far as hobbies, media and entertainment were concerned, the interviewees felt no need for participating in any English-language activities taking place in real life or online but Eila expressed her long-term wish to understand better English-language entertainment. In her interview, Eila describes how frustrated she felt already when she was listening to English pop music in the late 1960s and in the early 1970s:

5) Mua aina harmitti kun toiset oppi ne sanat sillai ku kuunneltiin aina hittibiisit ja kymmenen kärjestä tuli semmonen lista aina. Toiset oppi ne sanat helpommin sillai, mutta ne on koulussa alottanut sen englannin lukemisen ja mää luin sitä saksaa. Ja eihän ne jääny mulle päähän ku en mää yhtään ymmärtänyt mitä ne tarkoittaa ne sanat. Niinku ois jotain kiinaa laulettu. -- Ne sanat siis, vaikkei ne kappaleen sanat ois jääny, mutta ne laulujen nimet ei jääny mun päähäni. Se harmitti mua jossain määrin. (Eila)

I always felt annoyed when others learnt the lyrics when we were listening to hit songs and there was always this Top 10 list coming. Others learnt the lyrics more easily but they had started their English studies at school while I was studying German. And I couldn't remember any of

the lyrics because I didn't understand at all what the lyrics meant. As if they were singing in Chinese. -- The lyrics I mean, it wouldn't have mattered so much even if I didn't understand the lyrics but I couldn't remember the names of the songs. That annoyed me to some extent. (Eila)

Eila also knew that audiovisual translators are at times unable to translate every single meaning in limited time and space and she, therefore, wanted to understand English better in order to fully understand all the subtle meanings that are often lost in translation.

- 6) Must ois kiva tietää aina että joistain elokuvista se että mitkä jutut multa jää huomaamatta ja näkemättä mitä ei oo käännetty. (Eila)

I'd always like to know, for example in films, the things that I miss and can't see because they haven't been translated. (Eila)

In addition, Eila would have liked to read novels in the English language but it was no necessity for her. In his article, Preisler (2003: 123–125) claims that Danes with limited English proficiency have learnt to ignore most English-language messages around them. In contrast, it appeared that Eila was rather aware of some opportunities brought by better English proficiency even though she was unable to take the opportunities. Unlike Eila, Antero made no remarks on wanting to understand English more to have better access to the world of media and entertainment, which might be a sign of being unaware of all the opportunities brought by the English language. As far as online communities were concerned, Eila commented that she felt no need to participate in any English-language conversation, which is also typical behaviour for Finns over the age of 44 in the survey of Leppänen et al. (2011: 126).

- 7) -- eikä mun tartte osallistua mihkään semmisiin nettikeskusteluihinkaan jotka käydään (naurua) englannin kielellä. Että nyttinkin on varmaan jotain semmosia kansainvälisiä foorumeita. (Eila)

I don't have to take part in any Internet conversations that are taking place (laughter) in the English language. I guess, there are some kinds of international forums right now somewhere. (Eila)

The interviewees seemed to differ somewhat in their media and entertainment habits: Eila appeared to show more curiosity on English-language media and entertainment than Antero. Nevertheless, Eila seemed to dream only on being able to use English passively, for instance, while listening to music, watching a film or reading a book in English, not actively producing English herself, which was well in line with the findings of Leppänen et al. (2011: 125) in their survey of the use of English in Finland.

While the *need* to learn English seemed to come particularly from the interviewees' workplace contexts (discussed in Section 5.2), the *motivation* to learn English appeared to come from leisure-time activities and particularly from travelling, which had also put the interviewees into challenging situations with their limited English proficiency. The motivational aspect is more clearly visible in Eila's interview:

- 8) -- mikä ärsyttää erityisesti mua jossain, että sattumoisin jos on jossain opastetulla turistinähtävyysskohteella jossain linnassa taikka jossain ajelulla taikka jollain semmosella, ja sitten siellä on se englanninkielinen opas selvittää niitä asioita. Ja se niinkun oikeesti ärsyttää, että sitä ei ymmärrä, kun mää erityisesti haluaisin tietää aina, että justiin, että mitä tässä on tapahtunut ja minkälaisia juttuja tähän sisältyy tähän linnaan ja maisemaan ja näihin. Se on siis tosi hankala tilanne. Sillon mää oikeesti haluaisin osata sitä englantia. Se on semmonen jota mää ittelleni painotan että tää on semmonen asia, jonka takia mää voisin vaikka mennä jonnekin englannin kielen kurssille. (Eila)

-- what especially annoys me is that I happen to be in a tourist attraction site with guidance in a castle or on a tour or something similar and then there is this English guide explaining these things. And that seriously annoys me when I don't understand when I'd always liked to especially know what has happened here and what kind of things are included in this castle and scenery and all of this. It's a very complicated situation. At that moment I'd seriously want to know English. That is a thing that I emphasise to myself that this is a thing for what I could go to an English course. (Eila)

Possibly due to dyslexia, Antero had always experienced language learning very challenging and after retirement he could quickly name only travelling as a reason to improve his English skills and even then he would prefer other options, such as travelling with someone with good English skills.

- 9) Nyt kun mää oon työelämästä, nyt jättänyt työelämän niin en mää enää o, mulla ei oo tarvetta (parantaa englannin taitoja) siis sillain ainoastaan on jotain et jos lähtis matkoille johonkin, mutta ehkä se matkalla tarvittava kielitaito nin ehkä sen vois jotenkin hoitaa muutenkin, ettei sitä itte tarvitse opiskella enää. (Antero)

Now when I'm retired from work, I have no need (for improving english skills), only if I, for example, went travelling but maybe the language skills needed while travelling could be organised otherwise so that I don't need to study anymore. (Antero)

The English language Eila and Antero had met while travelling had caused them problems with understanding and feelings of anxiety and panic but they felt that this far they had managed to solve all problematic situations and both interviewees brought up the use of gestures as their last lifeline. They both also shared many of their experiences related to travelling and described them mostly with humour:

- 10) -- vuosi sitten justuinsa tilailin lentolippuja (Internetistä) ja siinä on kans se, että se ei kyllä suomen kielellä onnistu. Se on siis tosi hankalaa ja siinä menee aikaa ja hikikarpaloita tulee. Aina kun pääsee jonkun asteen eteenpäin, niin tulee uus, lävähtää uudet valikot siihen, ja sitten pitäis ymmärtää että mitä kummaa tässä nyt pitää tän tilaajan tietää ja valita, ja sitten kun just ja just kun pääsee melkein siihen viimeeseen portaaseen, niin sitten tulee joku semmonen automainos tulee sieltä ja sitten että oonks mää nyt tilannut jonkun vuokra-auton vai enkö mää oo tätä tilannu ja ja oonks mä nyt tilannut vakuutuksen vai enkö mää oo tilannu. Se on vähän semmonen tilanne, että siinä on vähän niinkun epävarma ittekin että mitähän tässä on tekemäisillään, mutta että kyllä mää oon lentoliput saanu. (Eila)

-- just a year ago I was ordering flight tickets (on the Internet) and that's not really possible in the Finnish language. It's really really difficult and it takes time and beads of perspiration are trickling down. Always when you get one step ahead, new menus pop up and after that you should understand what on Earth this orderer should know and choose and when you're almost done finally and get to the last step, then there is some kind of a car advertisement coming and then I'm like have I ordered a rental car or not and have I ordered an insurance or not. That's a situation in which I'm unsure what I'm doing but I did get the tickets. (Eila)

- 11) -- oot lentokentällä jossain ja sitten jossain on vaan kauhee lappu että tässä on tällanen ja tällanen, jotain selitetään, ja sitten sulla ei oo ketään, kuka tän, mitä tää tarkoittaa, että mitä tässä lukee tämmösiä. Tämmönen voi tulla, että joskus jossain Heathrow'n lentokentällä Englannissa ollut, että on pitänyt mennä johonkin, ja sitten on joku semmonen iso kyltti vaan, että siitä ei saa mennä ja taikka jotain ja mennä sinne ja tänne taikka. Niin sitten on vähän mitäs tässä nyt tehdään, että semmonen voi tulla, mutta kyllä niistä on aina selvitty. Mutta kyllä siitä nimenomaan semmonen pikku paniikki voi tulla joskus taikka on siis joskus tullut kyllä ettei se. (Antero)

-- you're at the airport somewhere and there is somewhere a horrible note that here is this and that, and something's being explained, and then you have no one who could, what this means, what does it read here. For example, this could happen that sometime somewhere I've been at Heathrow Airport in England, and I needed to go somewhere, and there is this big placard saying no access or go this way or that way. Well then I've been a little bit like what should I do, and this can happen but I've always survived from these situations. But it's possible to go into a small-scale panic sometimes and I have gone at times in fact. (Antero)

Even though interviewees' felt that language issues had been unable to considerably restrict their actions, in the following extract, Antero talks about feelings of exclusion when travelling:

- 12) -- oon kokenut jossain matkoilla, jos mää oon just esim. oon Ruotsissakin, ruotsiakaan en osaa, ja sitten toiset puhuu englantia näin, ja emmää oo niinku sitten, vähän niinkun että (viheltää) ne puhuu tuolla noin jotain, en tiedä mitä. Ja se on enemmän ollut sillain että matkoilla on semmonen, silloin tulee olo, että tuntee itsensä, että vähä on niinkun, että oonks mää niinkun mykkä, että kun mää mitään pysty sanoon? (Antero)

-- I've felt while travelling, if I'm, for instance, in Sweden, I don't know Swedish either, and all the others are speaking English, and I haven't been then, it's like (whistles) they're speaking about something over there, I don't know what. And it's been more often that the feeling comes when I'm travelling that I feel that it's like, am I a mute when I can't say anything? (Antero)

All in all, both Eila and Antero seemed to have a positive attitude to travelling, and in their stories, they mostly defined themselves positively as survivors who might have had language difficulties but, in their own opinion, those difficulties were most often unlikely to restrict them in the long run. Nevertheless, Eila and Antero clearly desired to participate more effectively and at least understand what is being talked about.

5.2 English at work

As earlier pointed out, the most acute need for improvement in English skills came from interviewees' workplace contexts. Before retirement Antero worked in a very specialised field and needed English mainly for reading texts with technical terms.

- 13) -- spesiaalialalla on niin, että kun se kuitenkin perustuu englannin kieleen tää työala, niin siinä tulee tämmösiä englanninkielisiä sanontoja ja sanoja ja näitä niin nehänhän menee väkisin sitten, kuitenkin joka päivä on niitten kanssa tekemisissä, niin kyllä niitä osaa. Ja sitten taas niinkin että jos on jotain vieraita ihmisiä ja vaikei kieltä osaa, niin kuitenkin pystyy heidän kans kommunikoiimaan, koska se on niinkun omaa erikoisalaa. (Antero)

-- in a specialised field it's so that, when after all this working field is based on the English language, then you come across with English sayings and words and so on, so you can't help learning them, when after all you spend all day with them, then you start knowing them. And on the other hand, if there are some foreign people and even if, you don't know the language, still you can communicate with them, because it's your own special field. (Antero)

In their survey, Leppänen et al. (2011) found a consistent tendency for experts, such as Antero, to encounter and use English more than average workers in Finland. At a certain point in his working history, Antero had also needed to translate a great number of technical texts from English into Finnish. He had to work at home in the evenings if he was unable to translate the texts during regular working hours. It was generally known at the workplace that Antero had very limited English proficiency and he was never expected, for instance, to speak with business visitors in English. Eila, in her turn, worked in a small office and needed English for searching information on the Internet and for reading texts on, for instance, British custom procedures and VAT information. Occasionally she also wrote emails in English with the help of a dictionary but she added that she could never fully understand the replies that she received to her emails. In addition, in the following extract, Eila describes how she feels when an English speaker calls their office:

- 14) -- joku onneton soittaa puhelimella meille englanniks, kysyy jotain. Ja siinä menee jo sormi suuhun ja menee änkytyksen puolelle, että siinä toivois että (nauraa) ois jo joku muu vastannu. (Eila)

-- some unfortunate person calls us in English, asks something. And at that moment I run out of ideas and start stuttering, so that I start wishing that (laughter) someone else had picked up before me. (Eila)

Nevertheless, Eila only had to speak English on the phone rarely. As Virkkula (2008: 414) states it, working tasks ultimately define what kind of language competence is needed, Antero having to deal with English technical jargon while Eila needing to read official texts and occasionally to write business emails in English. The limited English proficiencies of Eila and Antero clearly complicated their daily working tasks from time to time but the greatest challenge for them came from the world of computers and Internet, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Computers and the Internet appeared to be very much present in both interviewees' working tasks, Antero reporting to have been using computers since 1977 while Eila having started using computers in the 1980s. At work, Eila used computers a great deal to find information on the Internet and at times to discuss work-related issues with English speakers by email, as previously pointed out. In her interview, she describes how the world of Internet and particularly English as the main language of the Internet has affected her daily life:

- 15) Sit tää nettimaailman, se tietokoneympäristö, ni sehän on siis niin täysin englanninkielinen -- se on toi nettimaailma, johon oli pakko tutustua jo 80-luvulla, niin se on niinku entistä enempi semmonen englanninkielinen maailma. Siitä on niinku tavallaan ollu pakko selvitä jollain tavalla ja se on semmonen osa-alue, joka on myöskin kasvattanu jossain määrin sitä sanavarastoo, joka sillo 80- tai 70-luvulla synty. Niistä on ollu pakko selvitä joistakin tietokonemaailman englanninkielisistä sanoista. (Eila)

Then it's this world of Internet, computer environment, that is totally in the English language -- it's that world of Internet that I needed to become familiar with already in the 80s, well that is even more an English-language world. I've needed to survive it in some way and that is also a sector that has somewhat improved my vocabulary, which was born in the 80s or 70s. I've needed to survive some English-language words of the computer world. (Eila)

In addition, workers' in Eila's office used different kinds of computer programs in their work tasks and were often introduced to new commercial programs, which, in turn, usually required some English proficiency. Furthermore, as Antero used to work in a company doing both national and international business, he explained at length what happened when their

company decided to remove all Finnish-language computer programs and replace them with English-language programs at the turn of the millennium, the situation escalating into a war on language. Apparently, the problem was incompatible computer programs that resulted in translating errors that caused problems in the IT section of the company. According to Antero, workers with limited English proficiency fought for the Finnish language for a year or two and some Finnish-language programs were ultimately restored.

- 16) Mehän sitten kyllä kumottiin se. Siinäkin meni toista vuotta kiukutellaan sitten siitä, että ennen kuin sai sitten ja sitten ei kaikkia kuitenkaan, siellä on määrättyjä ohjelmia, semmosia mitä nyt enemmän käytti, niin niistä sitten annettiin, ne anto periks sitten, että saatiin suomenkieliset. (Antero)

We got it reversed. It took more than a year to whinge before we got it and even then we didn't get them all, there are certain programs, those ones that we used the most, those ones were given in so that we got them in Finnish. (Antero)

- 17) Kaikki oli englanniks. Eihän siitä tullut mitään, eihän työntekijät tavalliset, jotka on tuntipalkalla tuolla (tuotantoprosessissa), niin eihän ne hallinnut sitä kieltä ollenkaan. Sehän meni ihan piirileikiks koko homma. (Antero)

Everything was in English. That didn't work at all as the regular workers, who were there (in the production process) and were paid by the hour, they didn't know the language at all. The whole thing turned into a childish game. (Antero)

When studying workers with limited English skills in Finnish companies with English as the corporate language, Bergroth (2007: 103) found that English is most commonly encountered or used in work tasks, such as “emails, business trips abroad, company-internal meetings and reports, operating instructions, written documentation to customers, visitors, computer software, telephone, intranet, foreign colleagues, and trade journals”, many of these work tasks often taking place in a computer environment. Similarly, Antero and Eila encountered English a great deal while using computers and the Internet in their weekly work tasks. Despite certain English-language computer programs, internal communication, such as meetings and internal emails and messages, took place mainly in Finnish in Antero's workplace. As Eila worked in a small enterprise doing mainly business in Finland, all internal communication took place in Finnish. To conclude, the globalisation of the Finnish business world and English as its lingua franca affected the interviewees' daily life at work often through computing and the Internet.

As far as professional development was concerned, neither of the interviewees' felt that their limited English proficiency had considerably restricted them but for different reasons. Eila explained that the latest information in her work field was mainly published in Finnish and came from official sources, such as the Finnish Tax Law. As previously discussed, some of the latest computer program options that could potentially prove useful for Eila or her colleagues in the office (whose working tasks differed considerably from hers) were in English.

- 18) Luulen, että mä saan sen (uusimman ammatillisen tiedon) kyllä suomen kielellä. Mää luulen, että se on kaikkia tommosia niinkun Suomen lainsäädäntöä, kaikkia veroasioita ja kaikkia sellaisia. -- jotain ammatillisia juttuja on, usein ohjelma-asioita ja ohjelmapätkiä tarjotaan taikka tulee esiin taikka jotain semmosia, niin ne saatta olla semmosia, että kokeile tätä demoa ja sitten mene semmoselle ja semmoselle sivulle ja lataa sieltä ja sieltä, ja sekin sanotaan sitten aika useesti sitten englanniksi sitten, että mitä sun pitäis tehdä sen asian kanssa. (Eila)

I believe that I can get it (the latest professional knowledge) in the Finnish language. I think that it consists of things like the Finnish Law, all kind of taxation issues and so on. -- there are some professional things, programs and demo programs often being offered or come out or something like that, they can be like try this demo and go this and that web page and download it from this and that page, and that is quite often said in English what you're supposed to do with it. (Eila)

Nevertheless, Eila doubted that the language issues regarding computer programs were seriously limiting her professional development. Like Eila, Antero believed that the English language was unable to limit his professional development and knowledge. While the work field terminology was based on the English language and English was strongly present in Antero's daily work life, the Finnish production development in this special field was so highly developed that Antero was unsure if it would have ultimately proved very useful for him to learn more about other manufacturers' products.

- 19) -- sekin että sillain ammattitaidosta ja sillain, niin kuitenkin se tekemisen mikä oli Suomessa, se on aivan huippua tällä meidän alalla. Että oisko siitä mitään hyötyä ollut enää sitten niinkun varsinaisesti sen tuotekehityksen kannalta ja tuotteiden kannalta, vaikka ois niitä toisten prujuja saanut lukeekin jotain englanninkielisiä taikka muitten tehtaitten tietoja? Kuitenkin se tiedon niinkun spesiaalitiedon omaaminen, se oli niinkun täällä se parhain mitä maailmalla on.-- (Olimme) Alan täysin täysin huippukärkiä. (Antero)

-- one point about professional knowledge, after all the making in Finland, it was totally at the top in our work field. Well, would it have been any use after all from the point of view of production development and products, if we got to read something in English or the information of other factories? However, having the special knowledge, the best that you can have was here. -- (We were) The top of the top in the field. (Antero)

Antero clearly felt that he should have known more English but having access to the top knowledge in Finnish made learning English somewhat irrelevant. In the survey of Leppänen

et al. (2011: 156), a slight majority of Finns believed that access to up-to-date information would still be possible in Finnish in 20 years' time. As the newest information in Eila's case came mainly from official sources and in the Finnish language, it is highly unlikely that this situation change. In contrast, Antero worked in a much higher position, which intrinsically could have predisposed him to marginalisation because of his limited English skills. According to Virkkula (2008: 415), today the knowledge of English is regarded as a basic element in the professional competence of Finns working in high positions. Hence, she claims that limited English skills combined with a high position at work may ultimately lead to marginalisation in the working life. While Antero worked as an expert in a relatively high position and needed English daily at work, it seems that working in the production development of a pioneering company in their specialised field and thus having the top knowledge already in Finnish played an important role in him feeling not marginalised. To conclude, it appears that access to the latest professional knowledge may still be gained through the Finnish language in certain working fields.

While interviewees felt that their limited English proficiency was no obstacle for their professional development in their latest working situations, Eila believed that her poor English skills could possibly prevent her from changing jobs while Antero believed that he was practically unable to change jobs because of his work specialisation.

20) Mää luulen, että nykymaailmassa se töpäätoi työpaikan vaihtaminen ja hakeminen niin kyllä siihen kielitaitoon. (Eila)

I think that in these days changing jobs or applying for a job comes to a halt because of my language skills. (Eila)

Regarding advancement at the current workplace, Eila considered it irrelevant as she was the only person in their small business enterprise taking care of the daily financial work tasks. Antero, in turn, had managed quite well in making a career considering the facts that he had no further education after comprehensive education and he knew very little English.

21) Työpaikkaa en voinut ajatellakaan vaihtaa, koska se on niin spesiaali-ala, eikä siinä oo mitään oikeestaan ollut mitään järkeekään. Mutta jos ois tätä kielitaitoo parempi ollut, niin ehkä ois ura ollut ehkä toisinkin, mutta tänä päivänä niin se kuitenkin se spesiaalihomma, mitä mä tein, niin jos ois parempi kielitaito, niin emmää tiedä, oisko sitä ura kehittynyt yhtään enempää, kun mitä se nyt kehitty. Että aika hyvinhän se kuitenkin kehitty ura sillain, että vaikka ei insinöörin

tutkintoa ollutkaan, niin kuitenkin määhän sitten kyllä lopetin siihen insinöörin paikalle (naurua). (Antero)

I couldn't even think about changing jobs, because of the special nature of my work field and that doesn't really didn't make any sense. But if I had had better language skills, then maybe the career had been different but in these days after all the special work that I was doing, if I had had better language skills, well then I don't know if my career had developed much more than it did now. After all it developed quite well so that even if I hadn't a degree in Engineering, I ended my career to a position of an engineer (laughter). (Antero)

Thus, it seems that even though limited English proficiency had been no obstacle for Eila and Antero to having a satisfactory job, their poor English skills might have prevented them from choosing different work paths. Similarly, in the survey of Leppänen et al. (2011: 154), Finns believed strongly that limited English proficiency might cause difficulties in finding a job in 20 years' time. This opinion was the strongest among the highly educated, experts, managers, office workers and customer service workers (ibid.), to which both Eila and Antero belonged. Furthermore, Virkkula (2008: 415) believes that the higher the position of an employee with limited English proficiency is, the greater the risk of marginalisation grows. Thus, the opinions of Eila and Antero reflect well the general attitudes of Finns on the importance of English in the Finnish working life context.

As both Eila and Antero came across the English language regularly at work, they often faced the situation of needing help, which affected their daily life. Even though both of them had used independent problem solving tactics, such as using a dictionary, as well as social problem solving tactics, such as asking a colleague, Antero clearly preferred having another person to help him while Eila preferred solving problems by herself.

22) -- tuntee niin avuttomaks vähän itsensä, ja se ärsyttää, että tarttee nyt taas pyytää jotakuta muuta tähän apuihin, mutta kyllä niistä aina on jollain tavalla selvitty. Mielukkaammin sitä olisi siinä tilanteessa, että itse pystys selviään tämmösistäkin tilanteista mieluummin. (Eila)

-- I felt quite helpless and that annoys me that I need to ask someone for help once again, but I've always coped with these situations in one way or another. Yet, I'd prefer to be in a position that I could cope with these kinds of situations by myself. (Eila)

23) -- mulla oli se, että kyllä määhän tämmösissä (kieliongelmat työpaikalla), niin mulla oli aika matala kynnyks sillain, että voisin mennä kysyyn keltä vaan. (Antero)

-- in these kinds of things (language problems at the workplace), I had a low threshold so that I could go and ask anyone. (Antero)

The open-space office as a structure of the office also encouraged Antero in his preferred problem solving style and in his interview, he described how he often just asked for help in a loud voice and received the answer immediately. In addition, both interviewees brought it up that they most often asked for help from younger colleagues. In Antero's case, this was, however, at times problematic because of his superior position combined with his poorer language skills.

24) -- sitten kun oli iso ryhmä jo loppujasta, niin siellä oli aina kaikennäköistä tyyppiä. Eihän niiltä kaikilta voinut kysykään, ne vähän rupes heh heh eksää nyt tiedä mitä tää on heh heh -- mutta niihin nuorempiin nähden, niin sitten taas mulla oli esimiesasema taas niihin nähden, ettei nyt kauheesti voinut, vähän huulenheittoa oli, muttei sitä sitten sillain arvannut pahemmin sitten nokitella siinä asiassa. (Antero)

-- later on when we had a big group, then there were all kind of people. I couldn't ask all of them, they were a bit like ha ha ha don't you know what this is ha ha -- but in relation to the younger ones, I was, in turn, in a superior position, so that they couldn't so much, there was a little bit of trifling, but they didn't dare to needle me too much in this matter. (Antero)

This example serves perfectly in demonstrating how English proficiency can increase or diminish an employee's power at the workplace. All in all, Eila seemed to be more bothered about the feelings of dependence on other people regarding language issues at work while Antero appeared to feel less threatened by the partial loss of his independence when it came to language issues at the workplace.

5.3 Social exclusion

Eila and Antero both appeared to have adopted a similar kind of manner of reacting to the English language surrounding them. When the English-language message was judged to be irrelevant, Eila and Antero reported that they simply ignored it without having any particularly negative feelings. This was also a very typical way to react for Danes with limited English proficiency in Preisler's (2003: 124) study of Danes' use of English.

25) Tää että mitä tässä meiän kotoympäristössä näkyy tätä englantia niin ei se mun elämäni sillä lailla ihan hirveesti kuitenkaan vaikuta se, että mää oon tottunut siihen nyt nykyään jo, että jonkun kaupan nimi on vallan joku muu kun Suomalainen kenkäkauppa. Niin ei se mua sillai niin hätkäytä vaikka se on joku Shoe Shop, niin antaa mun puolestani olla. Ei se mua ärsytä ihan kauheesti kuitenkaan. Se on aika semmosta hienosti sanottuna globaalia jo, ja tavallaan että kyllähän se palvelee sitten niitä, jotka ei o alkuperäsiä suomalaisia, tosin kyllähän ne näyteikkunasta näkee, että täällä myydään kenkiä. (Eila)

This thing how English shows in our close environment, well it doesn't really affect my life so much, I'm already used to, for example, a shop being called totally differently from Suomalainen kenkäkauppa (the Finnish Shoe Shop). I'm not really startled by it being called some Shoe Shop, just let it be is my opinion. I'm not so annoyed by it after all. To put it in fancy terms, it's quite global, and in a way it does serve those who aren't indigenous Finns, although they do see it from the shop window that they sell shoes here. (Eila)

- 26) No sillain on, että jos englannin kielellä tulee jotain, niin sitten kun ei sitä ymmärrä aina täysin, että mitä siellä puhutaan, niin se ei se sillain enää tässä iässä ärsytäkään sillain kun ei sitä tiedä. On niinku, että joku huutaa, se on niin kun koira rouskuttaa nurkassa (naurua) ja sitten rouskuttakoon nyt sitten leukojaan. (Antero)

Well, if there's something coming in English and when I can't always understand it totally what's being talked about, then it really doesn't even annoy me at my age when I don't know. It's like someone is shouting, it's like a dog barking in the corner (laughter) and let it bark then. (Antero)

When the English-language message was judged to be either important or interesting, Eila and Antero described having feelings, such as irritation, frustration, panic, uncertainty and even feelings of social exclusion. Interestingly, the English-language message did only need to be deemed *interesting*, not necessarily important, to evoke negative feelings resulting from insufficient language skills. Once again, Preisler (2003: 124) reports very similar kinds of feelings when Danes with inadequate English skills encountered English that they were impossible to ignore. As Eila describes her feelings of exclusion on a tourist bus in the following extract:

- 27) Tää on justinsa se kysymys, kun mää oon siellä turistibussissa enkä mä ymmärrä yhtään mitään, että mitä hienoja juttuja se kertoo jostain ritareista ja kuninkaallisista ja jostain prinsessasta. -- mää tunnen olevani niinku H. Moilanen siinä ja kattelen vaan, että kuinka muut nauraa sen oppaan kivoille jutuille, kun ne on aika kivoja aina ne selitykset. (Eila)

This is exactly the situation when I'm on that tourist bus and I can't understand a word about what wonderful things the guide is telling us about knights and royals and some princess. -- I feel like some kind of an idiot and I'm just looking at other people who are laughing at the guide's fun stories as they are usually quite nice the stories. (Eila)

As previously pointed out in Section 5.1, Eila's main motivation to improve her English came from leisure-time activities that she precisely considered *interesting*. It is therefore only logical that being only partially able to participate in activities deemed interesting may cause a person to feel frustrated or even socially excluded, wanting to improve one's language skills.

Even though English-language messages deemed important or interesting caused different kinds of negative feelings in Eila and Antero, the interviewees felt that their limited English proficiency had only rarely played a role in them feeling socially excluded in Finland. Furthermore, throughout the survey of Leppänen et al. (2011), respondents who were likely to have the poorest English skills view constantly their opportunities in life in a much brighter light than respondents who were likely to have an excellent English proficiency when asked about life without a good command of English. Similarly, Preisler (2003: 124) has noticed that Danes with limited English proficiency are somewhat unaware of the actual amount of English that they are daily exposed to. This might imply that people with limited English skills may have learnt to ignore English and the opportunities it brings with (ibid.). To some extent, this might apply to Eila and Antero's situations as well. However, what connected the feelings of social exclusion in Eila and Antero's stories was the inability to communicate or understand in face-to-face contact with other people, although Eila clearly acknowledged that communication can also take, for instance, a written form when she remarked that she had never been in a situation in which everyone would have written only in English. In Extract 12, Antero described himself feeling like a mute when he had been travelling in Sweden with being able to speak neither Swedish nor English while everyone else participated in the conversation. In Extract 27, Eila described how she struggled to understand interesting stories relating to different places of interest in a foreign country while everyone else understood them without any difficulty and found them amusing. What also connected these examples was the fact that they took place outside Finland. When directly asked, Antero could name no situation in which he would have felt socially excluded in *Finland* while Eila could name only one situation in which she would have felt socially excluded in a *Finnish* context. The situation in question was applying for a job and she being the only applicant with limited English proficiency.

- 28) Ei mulla kyllä oikeastaan täällä kotimaassa, en oo joutunut kyllä semmoseen tilanteeseen, että missä olis tavallaan, että ois kaikki puhunu muut englantia taikka että mää olisin joutunu johonkin tilanteeseen, missä kaikki vaan kirjetetaan englanniks sillai, että mää olisin ulkopuolella muitten. Ei oikeastaan sillai täällä kotimaassa. Se tietysti on ehkä justinsa varmaan, se vois olla se tilanne, että kun on ne työhakemukset jonkun valitsijan pöydällä, ja sitten mää oon se ainoa, joka en osaa sitä englantia. -- Nin se vois olla semmonen, että kokee itensä vähän nyt ulkopuoliseks tässä porukassa, tässä hakijaporukassa. (Eila)

Not really in Finland, I've never ended up in a situation in which everyone else would have spoken English or I would have ended up in a situation in which everything would be written in English so that I would be left out. Not really here in Finland. It might be the situation in which all the job applications are on the decision-maker's desk and then I'm the only one who doesn't

know English.-- That could be a situation in which I would feel a little bit excluded from this group, this applicant group. (Eila)

It seems that the stories consistently involved some other people who were able to do what the person in question was unable to do. Thus, it appears that the actual feeling of social exclusion most often consisted of the inability to act like other people, imagined or real, in the same situation due to lacking language skills and also frequently of the inability to be in efficient face-to-face interaction in a foreign language.

It remained unanswered how well the interviewees acknowledged situations of social exclusion that were further away from a traditional face-to-face communication situation and having no particular person to interact with. For instance, Eila and Antero both were very aware of the role of English as the language of the Internet and computing and described at length their computer- and Internet-related problems. Nevertheless, they appeared to consider it only natural or obvious that English is the main language of the Internet and Finnish-language services on the Internet are somewhat restricted. As an example, in Extract 10, in which Eila described her challenging task of ordering flight tickets on the Internet, Eila mentioned it only as an aside that she believed that it is practically impossible to order flight tickets in Finnish today, which, in turn, could raise questions on the social inclusiveness of air travel. All of this might reflect a common attitude according to which Finns consider the Finnish language such a small, powerless and incomprehensible language to outsiders that in order to be in interaction with non-Finnish speakers, one must be able to communicate in other languages. Finns rarely tend to expect any kind of lingual accommodations or extra service while interacting with speakers of other languages. From this point of view, it does seem rather natural *not* to feel socially excluded from, for instance, the fields of computing and the Internet. Yet, it appears relevant to ask whether feeling and being socially excluded should be separated or whether they are the same phenomenon. Nevertheless, Extracts 16 and 17, which were about a language war at Antero's workplace, serve to illustrate what could still happen if English threatened the core needs, such as the ability to work, of Finns with limited English proficiency. All in all, it appeared that the interviewees understood social exclusion primarily as an interpersonal phenomenon.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present piece of research was to shed more light on the daily life experiences of Finns with limited English proficiency and to explore how it feels to live in today's Finland, in which the presence of the English language has grown considerably. As the topic of limited English proficiency in Finns' daily life has not been widely studied previously, I chose to study the topic qualitatively to gain some basic understanding of the topic. The data collection method was selected to be semi-structured interviewing mainly because this offered the participants the opportunity to raise thoughts that the interviewer could not possibly anticipate. The data consisted of two semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately for an hour each. The participants were both over 55 years old, lived in a city in Western Finland and worked or had worked before retirement in relatively high positions but estimated their own English skills as no more than poor. The interviewing data was analysed with thematic analysis as the method of analysis. Thematic analysis was selected as the method because little was known on the topic and it was therefore essential to first study what connected the daily experiences of people with limited English proficiency. The research questions appeared the following: 1) How insufficient English skills affect the daily life of people with limited English proficiency in Finland? 2) Do people with limited English proficiency feel socially excluded from certain areas of Finnish life?

For the most part, the results of the present study reflected previous studies (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2011; Pahta and Taavitsainen 2003, 2008; Virkkula 2008). The participants encountered English a great deal in their everyday life. One of the key findings of the study was that English affected the interviewees life differently depending roughly on whether English was encountered at work or at leisure. The participants felt that they encountered English more at leisure than at work but it had a different impact on their life. English encountered at leisure was typically seen as an additional element that could possibly improve one's life but it could also be easily ignored if deemed uninteresting. English encountered at leisure often opened new opportunities, particularly when it came to media and entertainment as well as travelling. These new opportunities, in turn, triggered motivation in the participants to learn more English. Interestingly, one issue in the domain of leisure formed a clear exception to this pattern and was raised by both interviewees. The lack of proper translations in some manual

instructions complicated the interviewees' life and affected their purchase decisions. Manual instructions were considered an essential element, not something additional or optional that could be taken or left like most other English-language items encountered at leisure. Even though the motivation or, to be more precise, inspiration to learn more English appeared to come more from leisure-time activities than work tasks, the most acute need for improving English skills came from the interviewees' work tasks. While Eila mainly searched for information on the Internet and wrote business emails in English, Antero had to deal with English technical jargon and special field texts as well as translating them into Finnish. Furthermore, the increasing globalisation of the Finnish working life and English as its lingua franca seemed to become visible most often through the media of computer and the Internet, which the interviewees used daily. English at work was most often present in computer-related work tasks and the interviewees strongly associated English with computers and the Internet. Even though English was daily present at the workplace of both interviewees, neither of them felt that their limited English proficiency had particularly restricted them at their latest working environment although they were at times dependent on their colleagues' assistance. Yet, they believed that if they entered the current job market, their limited English skills would prove a serious disadvantage. All in all, the effect of English on the daily of the interviewees appeared to be rather complex. English was often present in their lives in a technical form, such as through computers, Internet, radio and television. Generally, the participants seemed to have a positive overall attitude to English and they believed it opened new possibilities for them. The interviewees rarely felt socially excluded in Finland because of their language skills but they believed that in today's job market, they might be in the risk of marginalisation.

Although the interviewees rarely felt socially excluded in Finland, except in a hypothetical situation of changing jobs, they appeared to understand social exclusion primarily as an interpersonal phenomenon, not, for instance, as something to be seen in faceless social structures. When discussing social exclusion, the participants consistently described situations in which other people, real or imagined, were able to do something that they themselves were unable to do. Even though they had had multiple difficulties with computers and the Internet, it seemed to be taken for granted that English simply is the language of the Internet and in order to take advantage of the Internet, one needed to learn English first instead of demanding more Finnish-language service. In their national survey on English usage in Finland,

Leppänen et al. (2011) discovered that respondents who were likely to have little or no knowledge of English view constantly their opportunities in life in a much brighter light than respondents who were likely to have an excellent English proficiency when asked about life without a good command of English. Similarly, the interviewees believed that better English skills would most likely bring more comfort in their life but not particularly exceptional opportunities or real possibilities in life. In their life, English seemed to have the role of bringing additional comfort. Thus, it remains questionable whether the interviewees plainly missed opportunities and possibilities that more fluent English proficiency would have brought for them. Another questionable issue is whether *feeling* and *being* socially excluded should be separated and whether the final word on the issue should be said by people themselves or others around them. While the interviewees felt mostly socially included even though they, for instance, described their computer and Internet-related language problems at length, it appeared somewhat patronising to simply question their feelings and thoughts of their own social inclusion or exclusion. Nevertheless, while the feelings of the participants should be taken into account, earlier studies (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2011; Preisler 2003) suggest that people with limited English proficiency are often rather unaware of their actual amount of exposure to English-language messages. They are, therefore, unlikely to reach the same opportunities as people with excellent English skills. All in all, the interviewees felt mostly socially included in Finnish society with their limited English proficiencies but they also expressed their concern for the growing demands of English skills in the globalised job market. For them, English rarely functioned as a *sine qua non* in any area of their life and instead English had the function of creating comfort and facilitating life in general. Nevertheless, it remained questionable whether the interviewees' opportunities and possibilities in life would have been different if they had known more English.

As the present piece of research consists of only two interviews, the results serve mainly as a stepping stone to a larger and more detailed study. What I would do differently in researching the topic in the future would be using more often positive expressions when discussing social exclusion in order to prevent interviewees from polishing the truth about their problematic language issues. I would totally leave out expressions such as *outsider* and *exclusion* and I would try to turn the focus in conversation on other people's actions and how the interviewee feels about it instead of directing the focus on the interviewee and focusing on their language disabilities and on how it feels to be an outsider in this situation. I would approach the issue

more through the positive and through Can Do statements instead of Cannot Do statements to gain more reliable data. Furthermore, even though I gave multiple examples of non face-to-face language use, the interviewees seemed to view social exclusion strictly as an interpersonal issue, not a phenomenon to be seen in faceless social structures. In a future study, I would explicitly ask about specific issues, such as ordering goods and services on the Internet or using computer programs, that represent non face-to-face language use. Nevertheless, semi-structured interviewing proved a flexible and suitable choice for a research method as the topic had been studied only to a limited extent. The present piece of research is relevant because of three main reasons. Firstly, people with limited English proficiency form a considerable minority of approximately 930, 000 Finnish inhabitants in the globalising Finnish society and their inability to communicate effectively in English in today's Finland has formed a new kind of disability that Preisler (2003) describes with the term functional illiteracy. Secondly, this minority of the functionally illiterate and their current position in Finnish society have been studied only a little. This piece of research exists to gather more knowledge on the daily life in Finland without a sufficient command of English. Thirdly, to foster Finnish citizens' linguistic rights in Finland, it is essential to first conduct research on the topic. Thus, the topic of this study is important to study per se. The present study may prove useful to everyone who is to design language-related issues, items, goods or services. To study further the topic of limited English proficiency, it would be interesting to conduct more interviews with Finns with limited English proficiency and possibly to compare their answers with those of Finns who have a good command of English. Another research direction would be studying what kind of tactics people with poor English skills use to solve the problematic language situations that they encounter in their daily life.

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8 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The interview outline in Finnish

Tausta

- Millainen koulutus sinulla on?
- Kuinka korkealla tasolla olet opiskellut?
- Kuinka korkeassa asemassa olet työskennellyt viimeisimmässä työpaikassasi?

- Kuinka kauan ja paljon olet englantia opiskellut, jos olet sitä opiskellut?
- Millaiseksi arvioit oman englannin kielen taitosi ottaen huomioon perinteiset kielen eri osa-alueet (puhuminen, kirjoittaminen, kuullunymmärrys ja lukeminen)?
- Koetko oppineesi englantia enemmän luokkahuoneessa vai luokkahuoneen ulkopuolella?
- Koetko tarvetta parantaa englannin taitojasi? Miksi tai miksi et?

Englannin näkyvyys lähiympäristössä

- Kuinka paljon kuulet tai näet englantia ympärilläsi?
- Missä lähiympäristössäsi kohtaavat englantia?
- Joudutko vastakkain englannin kanssa enemmän työ- vai vapaa-ajalla?
- Mitä reaktioita englannin kielen kohtaaminen sinussa herättää?

Työssä pärjääminen

- Oletko tarvinnut työssäsi englantia?
- Onko työpaikallasi käytetty englantia sisäiseen viestintään?
- Koetko englannin kielen taitojesi rajoittaneen uramahdollisuuksia tai uralla etenemistäsi?
- Rajoittavatko mielestäsi englannin taitosi pääsyä uusimpaan ammatilliseen tietoon?

Ongelmalliset tilanteet ja ratkaisustrategiat

- Millaisissa tilanteissa englannin kieli on vaikeuttanut toimimistasi tai estänyt sen?
- Miten koet tällaisen tilanteen?
- Millaisissa tilanteissa ymmärryksesi on jäänyt vajaaksi, mutta ei ole estänyt toimintaasi?
- Miten reagoit vaillinaiseen ymmärrykseen?
- Miten ratkaisit ongelmalliseksi käyneen kielitilanteen?
- Jos kysyt joltakulta apua, millaiselta henkilöltä kysyt apua?

Englannin tulevaisuus Suomessa ja kokemukset ulkopuolisuudesta

- Kuinka tärkeää on mielestäsi osata englantia Suomessa?
- Koetko englannin uhkaavan suomen kielen asemaa virallisena kielenä?

- Kuinka tärkeän roolin uskot englannin saavuttavan Suomessa?
- Pitäisikö kaikkien suomalaisten osata englantia?
- Oletko koskaan kokenut oloasi ulkopuoliseksi englannin kielen taitojesi takia?
- Rajoittavatko mielestäsi englannin taitosi mahdollisuuksiasi Suomessa?

Appendix 2: The English translation of the interview outline

Background

- What kind of education do you have?
- What level have you studied at?
- How high was your position in your last job?
- For how long or how much have you studied English if you have studied it?
- If you estimate your own English skills keeping in mind the traditional components of language learning (speaking, writing, listening and reading), how would you describe your skills in English?
- Do you feel that you have learnt English more in the classroom or outside of it?
- Is there a need for you to improve your English skills? Why, why not?

The visibility of English in the close environment

- How much do you see or hear English around you?
- Where in your close surroundings do you encounter English?
- Do you come across with English more at leisure or at work?
- How do you react when you encounter English?

Managing at work

- Have you needed English at work?
- Have English been used for internal communication at your work place?
- Do you feel that your English skills have limited your career opportunities or advancement?
- In your opinion, do your English skills limit your access to the latest professional publications?

Problematic situations and problem-solving methods

- In what kind of situations English has hampered your actions or prevented you from acting?
- How do you feel in this kind of a situation?
- In what kind of situation you have not reached full comprehension but it has not prevented you from acting?
- How do you react to limited comprehension?
- How do you solve a problematic language situation?

- If you ask help from someone, what kind of a person do you ask help from?

The future of English in Finland and the experiences of exclusion

- How important do you consider English skills in Finland?
- Do you feel that English is threatening the position of Finnish as an official language?
- How important a role English will reach in Finland?
- Should every Finn know English?
- Have you ever felt excluded because of your English skills?
- Do your English skills limit your opportunities in Finland?